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 National Alliance on Mental Illness
NEWS

Summer 2020

SUPPORT



EDUCATION

2020 NAMI-NYS Education Conference

Building Momentum:



Coming Together to Create Our Future.

OCTOBER 23-25 ■ ALBANY MARRIOTT

ADVOCACY



AWARENESS



Off The Mask

Ending Stigma:
 A Celebration of
 Mental Wellness



October 23rd NAMI-NYS Board Elections
 Ballot Deadline

October 23rd and 24th Education Conference
 Online

November 6th Off The Mask
 Online

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Message from NAMI-NYS Board President

By Ariel Coffman

Hello NAMI Community,

A great challenge to humanity happened since the last time I spoke to all of you. No one could have imagined how these world events would change all of us. To those who lost loved ones to the pandemic, I extend my deepest sympathies to your families.



COVID-19 has changed the landscape of our state and our organization and now we are faced with the visionary task of leading forward. COVID-19 is still a serious public health risk, and I strongly encourage everyone to follow directives for wearing masks whenever social distancing cannot be maintained. This has proven to be effective, and the more we come to terms with this new reality, the more work we can get done to ensure the safety of our friends and loved ones who are struggling with their mental health.

The challenges the mental health system faces right now are of a proportion that we have rarely seen in history. Some of these changes have given us new insight into how to connect more people with the treatment and services they need. With the loosening of telehealth regulations at the beginning of the pandemic, many of our members have been able to access treatment in new and more convenient ways. Our NAMI programs have also gone virtual throughout the state in an effort to keep those in need connected and supported while coping with serious mental health challenges. On the other hand, we have seen changes in access to critical services such as the closure of hospital inpatient units and the loss of mental health programs in the community. This will place further barriers to care for individuals and families. However laser focused and loud our voices were in the past, they must now be amplified even more to ensure that our loved ones and the mental health community do not lose even more critical programs.

We have also seen a great social justice turning point in the history of our country as the fight for racial equality has come to the forefront of our minds, communities and our organization. I am proud to have been the Board President as our organization has stepped up to meet this challenge by evaluating, educating and working to change in order to meet the needs of our ENTIRE mental health community, including people of color and those who identify as being a part of the LGBTQIA community. The mental health needs of these communities are great, and we are striving to meet the challenges of being a truly diverse organization.

NAMI NYS has been a leader during this transitional time and I want to extend a heartfelt thanks to our NYS board, our Executive Director-Wendy Burch, all of our NAMI staff, volunteers and affiliate leaders for their perseverance during what sometimes has seemed a vertical climb.

Since this may be my last time addressing all of our membership in writing during 2020 (I am taking the required year off that is outlined by our board bylaws), I wanted to let you all know how much I have cherished my time as a leader within this organization. There is something unbelievably special about the people who serve NAMI. I have come to know so many brilliant and motivated individuals over the past 5 years and I look forward to continuing my relationships with all of you as we continue to raise our voices in activism, education, and support for people with serious mental health issues. ■

Message from Executive Director, Wendy Burch

To say that 2020 has been an unusual year so far would be an understatement. We have all faced some truly unique challenges, and through it all we have supported each other in a myriad of ways.

During COVID-19, we experienced the threat of extreme isolation and loneliness, yet the NAMI family stayed connected in innovative ways. Here at NAMI-NYS, we implemented a host of online activities to help folks cope with the pandemic and remain healthy and positive. From yoga to life coaching to performances through the *NAMI Café* series, we tried to offer something for everyone, even a *“Cooking Up Comfort”* event presented by U.S. Army veteran (and spouse of NAMI-NYS Board member, Maggie Bristol) Jeremy Bristol. We also introduced the *Perspectives* video series, hosted by our own Matthew Shapiro, who interviewed various people about how they are getting by during this unusual time.

We didn't neglect our NAMI programs, and NAMI affiliates around the state have been able to transition to online programming, offering classes virtually through online platforms, support groups via online and conference call formats and virtual

presentations of *In Our Own Voice*, *Ending the Silence* and *Family and Friends*. NAMI-NYS is currently conducting program training virtually as well, so we have been able to train teachers and facilitators. With demand for NAMI programs higher than ever, we are relieved to be able to continue to offer them despite the social distancing guidelines.

On a related note, stay tuned for details around this year's *Education Conference*, which is still planned for October 23rd and 24th. We will be offering the conference virtually as well, but that doesn't mean that it won't be interactive. The Education Conference Committee recognizes how important the personal connections participants experience while attending the annual conference are, and we are therefore focusing on keeping the conference as interactive as possible with networking opportunities throughout.

While the legislative session was cut short earlier this year, NAMI-NYS continues to advocate, and we still need your voice. This issue of the newsletter details where we stand in regard to outreach and advocacy, and there are several topics of importance

that affect mental health services and resources for years to come. I urge you to continue to advocate for them, and you can be sure that NAMI-NYS will remain in the fight for the long haul.



Finally, I want to say a word about the divisiveness that has become so prevalent around the nation in recent months. We have begun to recognize some areas where we as a society may have fallen short. I trust in NAMI to lead the way in working together respectfully and collaboratively to address disparities related to all aspects of mental health and to advocate in a way where we can all move forward together.

I am proud to be a part of such a transformative organization. The support that NAMI members provide to each other and to the community is truly inspiring. Hope starts with you! ■

NAMI-NYS Strategic Plan

NAMI-NYS is close to finalizing the 5 year strategic plan for the organization. Many of our members provided feedback through the survey the Strategic Planning Committee disseminated earlier this year. Much of the plan is in line with NAMI's plan at the national level. The NAMI-NYS Board recently voted on the following goals for the plan:

- GOAL 1:** People Get Help Early
- GOAL 2:** People Get the Best Possible Care
- GOAL 3:** People Get Diverted From Criminal Justice Involvement
- GOAL 4:** Listen and Build Our Community
- GOAL 5:** Strengthen the Organization

As we finalize the objectives of the plan, the NAMI-NYS committees are working with the Strategic Planning Committee to identify objectives that support the organization's mission and vision, the goals of the committees and the needs identified by the membership. ■

Social Media



NAMI_NYS



NAMINewYorkState



NAMINewYork

Meet the NAMI-NYS Staff



Wendy Burch, Executive Director

Wendy has served as the NAMI-NYS Executive Director since May of 2014. As the executive director, Wendy supervises the outstanding NAMI-NYS staff as they strive to support the operations of the local affiliates and advocate for New Yorkers living with mental health issues and their families. Wendy works with the staff to ensure that the organization is executing the NAMI-NYS mission and the policies set by the Board of Directors. This includes committee work, the oversight of NAMI-NYS programs and advocacy efforts and ensuring that NAMI-NYS remains fiscally viable and responsible.

Wendy shared, “My favorite part about NAMI is to see people who have taken their own struggles and used them to help others. I am daily inspired by the personal stories that family members and people living in recovery are willing to share, the time they dedicate to lead classes and support groups, give presentations and advocate on behalf of themselves and others. NAMI provides support and hope to so many, and I am proud to be a part of the NAMI family.” ■

Contact
Wendy Burch at
Wendy@naminys.org



Matthew Shapiro, Associate Director of Public Affairs

Matthew began his work at NAMI-NYS in 2008 and is now the Associate Director, Public Affairs. He is responsible for NAMI-NYS legislative and advocacy work, overseeing our communication efforts as well as planning the NAMI-NYS Annual Education Conference. Matthew is currently working to ensure access to vital mental health services that are being threatened by the COVID-19 Outbreak along with producing NAMI-NYS’s Perspectives and Breakthrough video series. In addition, Matthew is working to transition the annual conference to an interactive virtual event.

Matthew shared that he unfortunately didn’t learn about NAMI until he joined the NAMI-NYS team. “I wish I knew about NAMI-NYS when both I and my family were first impacted by psychiatric issues. Mental health is important to me because it is the most important part of life, without mental wellness you have nothing. My favorite part of working at NAMI is the opportunity to inspire people and help them find their advocacy voices.” ■

Contact
Matthew Shapiro at
Matthew@naminys.org



Kate Tortora, Community Education and Outreach Coordinator

Kate joined the NAMI-NYS team this past February as the Community Education and Outreach Coordinator. Her responsibilities include making connections and building relationships with people in the community, raising awareness of NAMI-NYS and the programs, advocacy, and education that we provide, as well as planning and executing NAMI-NYS’s largest fundraiser event, “Off The Mask.” NAMI-NYS “Off The Mask” is a fashion and art show fundraiser that will take place on November 6th, 2020.

Kate shared that mental health is important to her because “it is something that we all have, and at some point, in our lives we all have experienced poor mental health and its effects on us. I know that for me, when my mental health is not at its best, I can’t be the best version of myself and am less productive. It took me a long time to realize that my mental health really needs to come before anything, and then everything else can fall into place. My favorite part about working for NAMI is hearing positive feedback from those whom we have helped. It was a great honor to be able to play a big role during May, Mental Health Awareness Month, and lead some of our virtual programs. Especially during this unique time of COVID-19, it was very touching to just hear our attendees of these programs be so grateful and thankful that NAMI-NYS is here for them.” ■

Contact
Kate Tortora at
Kate@naminys.org



Cassandra Farrugia, Communication Specialist

Cassandra joined the NAMI-NYS staff this past October as the Communication Specialist. In addition to her work on NAMI-NYS’s publications such as the E-newsletters and Print newsletter, social media pages, youth development initiatives such as NAMI on Campus and the NAMI-NYS Youth Advisory Council, multicultural initiatives, and NAMI-NYS Breakthrough video series, Cassandra helps to create and promote NAMI-NYS’s various mental health awareness campaigns, programs and events. She has also recently been trained as NAMI Connections facilitator.

Cassandra is currently revamping the NAMI-NYS website with new and updated information, resources and other content. She is also currently focusing on our Youth Development initiatives as we continue to reach out to build our Youth Advisory Council.

Cassandra shared, “I am so proud to be a member of the NAMI-NYS family. NAMI is a wonderful organization that truly serves its communities. My favorite part about NAMI-NYS is that we work to provide and connect those impacted by mental health with not only support, education and advocacy but with the tools needed for community members to continue this work at home. Through our various programs, campaigns and other initiatives, we are able to spread awareness, destigmatize mental health and to provide those in need with help and hope.” ■

Contact
Cassandra Farrugia at
Cassandra@naminys.org



Tammie Paradis, Affiliate Development Coordinator

Tammie is the Affiliate Development Coordinator, her responsibilities include membership, affiliate development, developing/helping new NAMI affiliates, NAMI Signature Programs (State Program Coordinator), and administration for Model B Affiliates. Tammie has been part of the NAMI-NYS staff since 2011, approximately 9.5 years. She originally started as a part time office assistant.

Tammie shared that before her job search, she had never heard of NAMI. “I could not believe that NAMI even existed since I had been looking for so long and so hard to find something to help ME while I was helping my child. I strongly believe in NAMI and all that we do. Mental Health is extremely important to me as it affects several members of my family. I have learned a lot and have used a lot to help me become the patient and understanding mother and grandmother that I am. The more that I can learn the more that I can share both with my family as well as friends and the community. My favorite part about working for NAMI-NYS is the people that I work with. I feel that it is definitely a second family. This includes the immediate office as well as the affiliates. I also believe in NAMI and want to do my part to help spread the word of NAMI out in the community. I might not be the face or on the frontline but I believe that what I do for NAMI helps bring NAMI to our community. I love and believe in my job and cannot imagine being anywhere else. It is amazing working with people who all have the same goal.” ■

Contact
Tammie Paradis at
Tammie@naminys.org



Christine Rickeman, Resource and Information Helpline Coordinator

Christine has been operating the NAMI-NYS Helpline since May of 2011, following an internship with Sage College. She responds to a variety of calls and emails from persons struggling with issues related to their or a loved one’s mental health. The subjects of these calls can range from legal issues/criminal justice due to a mental illness, housing, complaints against facilities/ providers, SSDI questions, to just wanting information for support and education through their local Affiliates. Many callers just need that person on the other end just to listen and know someone cares. Christine is also responsible for creating and distributing mental health literature around the state through the local affiliates and other agencies statewide, and she keeps the website and E-news updated with useful resources.

Christine is also highly involved with her local affiliate, NAMI Capital Region NY, and has served on their Board of Directors. She is a trained leader in Family-to-Family, Peer-to-Peer, Basics, IOOV, Family Support Group, Connections (as a facilitator and State Trainer), and Provider Education.

Christine shared that her favorite part of working at NAMI-NYS is, “knowing I have helped someone get through a rough time and letting them know we do care. For me, the best part of NAMI is knowing you are not alone, as we are all affected in one way or another by mental illness and being able to understand and help with our lived experiences really means a lot to those we serve.” ■

Contact
Christine Rickeman at
Christine@naminys.org



Jeanne Ryan, Finance and Office Administrator

Jeanne has worked at NAMI-NYS for 3 years and is the Finance & Office Administrator. Her responsibilities include day to day financial aspects of the organization. In addition, she provides support for the organization’s annual audit, contracting with OMH, and preparing and submitting the organization’s annual Federal Grant Application. She also works with the executive director and Finance Committee to draft the annual budget. ■

Contact
Jeanne Ryan at
Jeanne@naminys.org

NAMI-NYS Temporary Helpline Number and Online Resource Page

To continue providing our communities with support and resources, NAMI-NYS established a Temporary Helpline Number: **(518)-248-7635**. The Helpline is monitored by Christine Rickeman, NAMI-NYS Helpline Coordinator, who is available weekdays from 8:00am-4:30pm.

NAMI-NYS
is here for you!
Call our temporary
Helpline number
518-248-7634

And remember to reach out to your local NAMI Affiliate for resources and support during these uncertain times.
Visit NAMINYS.ORG and email us at info.naminy.org for more information.

NAMI New York State
National Alliance on Mental Illness

Do you need to talk??
We are here for you.
Our support is still available by phone or video.
Contact our Helpline directly at
212-684-3264 or
helpline@naminyc.org
Or go to naminy.org
read more, and then call us.

NAMI New York State
National Alliance on Mental Illness

NAMI NYC Metro's Helpline continued to be available as a source of information and support. Contact NAMI NYC Metro at **212-684-3264** (10 am to 6 pm) or email them at helpline@naminyc.org.

NAMI Westchester Helpline calls continued to be answered by a live, trained person, and the affiliate expanded the Helpline hours to provide resources and support to people in need.

In addition, NAMI-NYS created a **COVID-19 Resource Page** with information from NAMI, CDC, NIMH, NYDOH and other relevant sources. The page also features relevant updates and changes to our NAMI Affiliates' current operations.

New Yorkers can also access support through the New York State Office of Mental Health's COVID-19 Emotional Support Helpline at 1-844-863-9314. This call in line is operational 7 days a week from 8 am to 10 pm. ■

Online Programs

At the onset of COVID-19 and the need for maintaining physical distance, NAMI recognized that the need for NAMI support groups and classes was more vital than ever before. NAMI quickly developed and disseminated guidelines for holding NAMI programs remotely, and the NAMI affiliates in New York have been working together to make the transition as smoothly as possible.

Several NAMI affiliates in New York were quick to take advantage of presenting NAMI programs remotely. Some affiliates are conducting support groups telephonically, while others are using online platforms. NAMI classes and presentations can only be done via online platforms, and NAMI has provided a guide to ensure effective and confidential remote programming.

With the local affiliates' assistance, NAMI-NYS arranged some "lessons learned" meetings for NAMI affiliates to prepare for remote programs. NAMI Westchester shared their experiences with presenting In Our Own Voice, NAMI Mid-Hudson shared their experience partnering with the local school system to present Ending the Silence to students and NAMI Rockland related to the affiliates their experiences with presenting Family and Friends. NAMI NYC Metro talked about providing online classes, in particular their success with NAMI Basics and Family to Family. The aforementioned affiliates, along with NAMI-NYS Programs Committee Chair Ellen Ritz, also talked in depth about conducting NAMI support groups both online and telephonically. These meetings provided an opportunity for affiliates to ask questions and share ideas around conducting NAMI programs remotely.

Several NAMI affiliates throughout New York have implemented virtual programming. NAMI Westchester reported they have established virtual support groups, including three Family Support Groups and two NAMI Connection groups. They were also able to provide **In Our Own Voice** presentations to a church group, a business group and a college and are looking at the possibility of continuing to provide virtual groups, programs and presentations even after restrictions for group gatherings are lifted, in order to continue to reach those who either need to be or choose to continue to quarantine.

While we prefer to be able to offer NAMI programs in person whenever possible, remote programs have made it easier for people to take advantage of NAMI resources who do not reside in a geographic area with NAMI support, who have difficulty leaving their homes or finding transportation to attend NAMI programs.

In addition, during March and April, NAMI-NYS coordinated several new programs to keep our community members statewide connected and prevent social isolation. ■

LEARN MORE HERE:

NAMI-NYS Journaling Block

On Monday, April 13th, NAMI-NYS launched a **Journaling Block** program to provide our community with a space for acceptance, growth and mental wellness. We created two voluntary journaling projects for our participants with new prompts every session:

1. A self-care journal for positive journaling filled with uplifting experiences and moments that have brought hope, joy, and gratitude. These entries were meant to form a happy memory bank to look back on.
2. A cathartic expression practice to write about challenging experiences to better articulate and process emotions.

NAMI-NYS would like to offer a special thank you to Mary Beth Honsinger, President of NAMI Capital Region, who helped co-host the program and to all our participants a special thank you for taking part in our journaling projects and for their willingness to share and connect during these uncertain times. ■

NAMI-NYS Live Virtual Yoga Sessions

On Tuesday, March 31st NAMI-NYS began a new series of online programming. We kicked off the series with **NAMI-NYS Live Virtual Yoga** with Mandee Guzzo. The purpose of this program was to promote mental and physical wellbeing. It ran through April and was extended into the month of May as part of our Mental Health Awareness Month Campaign.

About Our Instructor – Mandee Guzzo



Mandee has been practicing yoga both asana and meditation for 6 years. Yoga has helped her achieve a healthy mind body connection.

She earned her 200hr Therapeutic Teacher training at Phoenix Rising school of yoga therapy. In sharing her practice she hopes it will deepen others' understanding of themselves inside and out. She offers therapeutic classes with dynamic flows, a focus on self care, and mind body connection.

NAMI-NYS would like to offer a warm thanks to Mandee Guzzo, our wonderfully talented yoga instructor, for hosting the program and facilitating reflections. We would also like to thank all our loyal participants for joining us and all those who were able to donate at this time. All proceeds raised go to NAMI-NYS and our mission. We are so grateful to have shared this amazing experience with all of you. ■

Perspectives Video Series

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, NAMI-NYS created the **Perspectives** video series to keep our NAMI-NYS family connected by providing insight, inspiration and, most importantly, hope. The series features perspectives from a wide range of guests from our community including prominent figures, NAMI-NYS leaders and general NAMI-NYS members.



Our guests have discussed how they are persevering during these uncertain times as well as what's keeping them entertained, physically active and mentally well. Triumphant over adversity and complicated challenges is a hallmark of the NAMI-NYS family, and Perspectives will continue to explore how to take lessons learned from previous challenges and apply them to our current situation, so we don't just withstand the COVID-19 outbreak, but by learning from each other we become stronger because of it.

Tune in and learn more on NAMI-NYS Perspective at naminy.org and/or contact Matthew@naminy.org. ■

NAMI-NYS Presents Maintaining Mental Wellness with Life Coach, Greg Aidala

On Friday, April 17th, certified life coach, Greg Aidala joined NAMI-NYS for this series of open discussions with participants to gauge our community members' mental states since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic. Greg utilized his coaching skills and motivational methods to encourage and provide hope to participants in need.

About Greg Aidala



Greg Aidala is an award-winning entertainer and Certified Life Coach. He's appeared on the Lifetime Movie Network, MTV,

PBS and Amazon Prime. He started mentoring and coaching in 2008, and since then he has been hired to perform managerial efficiency and keynote speaking engagements for various businesses that infuse comedy, coaching and motivational tactics.

NAMI-NYS would like to extend a really big thank you to Greg Aidala for generously donating his time and talents to lead these positive Life Coaching sessions for NAMI-NYS. These sessions were so helpful and have created hope and motivation for several people, especially during these uncertain times. ■

Live Fitness Bootcamp with Instructor, Lisa O'Donnell Wolfe

On Saturday, April 11th, NAMI-NYS began our **Live Fitness Bootcamp** workout program to promote mental and physical wellness with instructor Lisa O'Donnell.

About Lisa O'Donnell Wolfe:



Lisa has been teaching fitness classes for 23 years. She is also a certified Health & Life Coach (HCI), Precision Nutrition L1

Coach, & a personal trainer (ACE). Mental and physical well being is a critical part of her client coaching program. Lisa is also one of the NAMI-NYS **Off The Mask** model ambassadors. Learn more at OffTheMask.org.

Lisa has been very generous in donating her time and talents to host this program through the month of April and May as part of our Mental Health Awareness Month Campaign. The program was an hour long and a wonderful way to stay active and challenge yourself physically during this time of social distancing. NAMI-NYS extends their warmest thank you to Lisa O'Donnell Wolfe for her continued dedication to NAMI-NYS and our mission.

Lisa is also one of this year's Off the Mask models, and you can view her profile on the 2020 Off the Mask site. ■

NAMI-NYS Movie Nights In Series

On Thursday, April 2nd, NAMI-NYS began hosting **Movie Nights In** every Thursday throughout the month of April. The purpose of this series was to provide a space for our community members to feel connected as we continued to practice social distancing measures. We had kicked off the series with a showing of *Groundhog Day* followed by some engaging movie trivia. We offer all our attendees a warm thank you for joining us. ■

Online Trainings

Online Family to Family Training

On June 13 and June 20th, NAMI-NYS held its first online training for the *Family to Family* class. The training, originally scheduled to take place in Albany on June 13 and 14th, moved online under social distancing guidelines. Sharon McCarthy and Audrey McNerney served as the instructors for the training, certifying 10 new Family to Family teachers from various NAMI affiliates around the state. NAMI-NYS is so grateful to all the volunteers so willing to sacrifice their time in support of others in need. For the time being, we will be moving forward with online program training until the danger around COVID-19 has passed. ■



NAMI-NYS Supports Vets

A New Family Model for Veterans and their Families

Homefront, a free NAMI class for family members of military veterans/service members, is an effective program designed to help families support their loved ones who have served. The experience of having been a member in the armed forces can have a unique effect on how one perceives and deals with a mental health condition, making Homefront a valuable resource for families of military veterans. However, NAMI recognizes that it can often be challenging to take advantage of NAMI programs with all the other daily responsibilities we face-work, taking care of the home, child care, supporting loved ones who might be struggling- and NAMI continues to seek ways to make participating in NAMI programs more accessible. NAMI Syracuse has designed a way to deliver NAMI programming that serves the whole family.

NAMI Syracuse Program Coordinator Ann Canastra, LMHC, MSW, LPC, shares:

Veterans have barriers to care when they have small children and/or cannot accommodate traditional hours of care within the VA and/or outside medical community (for example, 8-4 pm). Also, the stigma associated with mental illness and its treatment prevents many veterans from seeking the services that they need – military culture has traditionally

not encouraged mental health treatment. We see this often when veterans share that they could have received a change in duty but were reluctant to let their comrades down and/or risk being perceived as weak. Also, we know that many families who may want to engage in care with their veterans may not have the resources or means to do so through private insurance or have the ability to self-pay for care. This is especially true for our non service-connected Veterans.

This new family/veteran support model includes the entire family system. The Veteran comes to attend Peer Support Group (NAMI Peer to Peer) and the family attends a family support and education group (NAMI Homefront). While their parents are participating in the NAMI programs, the children attend a childcare program led by certified professionals (YMCA staff who are childcare specialists prepared a “healthy kids” program that includes education about foods, an exercise component, as well as a hands-on craft component for each week). This enables the Veteran and the entire family system to get support in a non-traditional way, for free.

Veteran/Military Peer support is the practice of obtaining support from fellow veterans who have “walked a mile in my shoes.” This changes

veterans’ lives by helping them to feel a sense of comradery, destigmatizing treatment, builds trust, restores hope, and can save veteran lives by simply asking the right questions and “being there.”

By family members getting support and education at the same time, families learn how to best support their veterans, how to recognize warning signs of crisis (to include suicidal behaviors), the foundations of trauma and how it can impact the entire family, and a platform to ask questions and to get answers about medications, research, and the science behind mental illness. Families also learn how to better communicate, demonstrate empathy, and how to engage in care to support the Veteran.

As outlined above, the model that NAMI Syracuse has developed keeps the family unit together, rather than each member of the family having to find the time to seek out the support they need. Incorporating peer support where the adults can take advantage of NAMI classes, while at the same time they can be assured that the children are being well cared for, facilitates access to NAMI resources and helps to address the stigma and secrecy around receiving mental health services. ■

NAMI-NYS Supports Multicultural People and Communities

Mission and Goals of the NAMI-NYS Multicultural Committee By Ceceile McIntosh Green, Chair of Multicultural Committee

The NAMI NYS Multicultural Committee strives to honor and embrace the unique qualities of every human being and serves to advise NAMI NYS in addressing the needs of multicultural individuals and their communities impacted by mental illness.

The mission of the NAMI NYS Multicultural Committee is to encourage those affected by mental illness who feel they have been disenfranchised because of their race, color, sex, religion, creed, national or social origin or other status such as disability, age, marital and family status or sexual orientation. The Committee serves to create a greater awareness of the cultural context of each individual’s life, especially as they struggle with mental illness, and the societal disparities in accessing appropriate mental health care, to promote equity and to enhance opportunities for inclusion and to advocate for change in the mental health arena.

The NAMI NYS Multicultural Committee at its core understands that cultural differences can influence the delivery and reception of mental health treatment. It is therefore essential for cultural identity and mental illness in the context of one’s unique individual framework to be explored and discussed in a manner that fosters respect and unconditional positive regard.

The NAMI NYS Multicultural Committee makes recommendations for ways in which NAMI NYS can work to improve the design, development, accessibility and evaluation of culturally competent and linguistically appropriate systems for the provision of mental health services. In order that NAMI NYS can more effectively serve our multicultural members and their respective communities across New York state, the Committee is enhancing its education, advocacy and awareness tools to fully address their mental health needs.

The Committee plans to infuse the Education Conference with Diversity as a theme, to propose and effectively implement a multicultural signature program and to support the NAMI-NYS membership in the development of culturally specific support groups. The Committee also intends to focus on the development of fundraising events specifically for supporting multicultural mental health needs, to continue in developing effective partnerships with entities such as SOMOS, Inc. and the NYS Association of Black, Puerto Rican and Asian Legislators, Inc and to ensure that NAMI NYS develops resources in various languages spoken by New Yorkers in addition to English.

The NAMI NYS Multicultural Committee will continue to recommend that the organization celebrate and weave Diversity, Equity and Inclusion into its organizational fabric as NAMI NYS joins NAMI at the national level in incorporating it to become part of its standard operating procedures.

If you have an interest in contributing your time and effort into supporting the aims of the NAMI-NYS Multicultural Committee, please reach out by either calling the NAMI-NYS office at **518-462-2000** or emailing the committee at info@naminys.org. ■

NAMI NYC Metro Launches Black Minds Matter

As an affiliate in one of the most diverse cities in the world, NAMI NYC Metro was thrilled to launch a new support group in June 2020. **Black Minds Matter** is a new support group for people who identify as Black and are living with a mental illness.

A support group member shared, *“It is great to be a part of a support group specific to African Americans. This is a missing and welcomed piece. I appreciate the uniqueness of speaking with others like me.”*

Black Minds Matters meets every 2nd and 4th Friday, from 6 to 7:30pm ET, via video or phone. Go to naminyc.org/calendar for information on how to connect. ■

Black Minds Matter

Peer support
for people
who identify
as Black and
are living with
mental illness.

**Every 2nd & 4th Friday
6pm to 7:30 ET
via video + phone**

Go to naminyc.org/calendar for info
Or contact our Helpline
212-684-3264 or helpline@naminyc.org

NAMI-NYS SUPPORTS

NAMI-NYS Faithnet

NAMI affiliates around the state have recognized that for many, spiritual fulfillment is important to their mental health and is often a key element in their recovery. Faith leaders serve as a support for so many people, and NAMI seeks in turn to serve as a support to them as they minister to their community. NAMI programs are just another resource that faith leaders can draw on when assisting those who are struggling with mental health concerns.

NAMI Queens/Nassau and FaithNet

NAMI Queens/Nassau has recognized the value of collaborating with faith leaders to serve the community. Through their Faithnet Committee and their monthly spirituality group, the affiliate has had the opportunity to offer support and assistance to faith communities in the affiliate's area.

Ellen Ritz shares information on some of the work the affiliate is doing:

Spirituality Group:

NAMI Queens/Nassau's Spirituality Group, led by Chaplain Van Frankel and Ellen Ritz, has been meeting for over 3 years. The group meets monthly, is open to everyone and is now meeting through Zoom.

Spiritual wellness is a personal matter involving values and beliefs that provide a purpose in our lives. While different individuals may have different views of what spiritualism is, it is generally considered to be the search for meaning and purpose in human existence, leading one to strive for a state of harmony with oneself and others, while working to balance inner needs with the rest of the world.

The Chaplain brings different written thoughtful material to each session which inspires insight, thought and mindfulness. I leave the sessions realizing that I have looked at thoughts and experiences more deeply and feeling more connected and peaceful. If you are interested in joining us virtually please sign up at namiqn.org website.

NAMI Queens/Nassau FaithNet Committee:

NAMI Queens/Nassau's FaithNet Committee is an group of faith leaders and members inclusive of all faiths who come together to educate and support faith leaders and their communities, focusing on how to help and support not only those who have mental health challenges and their families, but to have a safe place where faith leaders find support for their own challenges. **Our FaithNet's mission statement:**

NAMI FaithNet is an information exchange network of NAMI members, friends and clergy of all faith traditions who wish to create more welcoming and supportive faith communities for persons and families touched by serious mental health disorders (Neurobiological

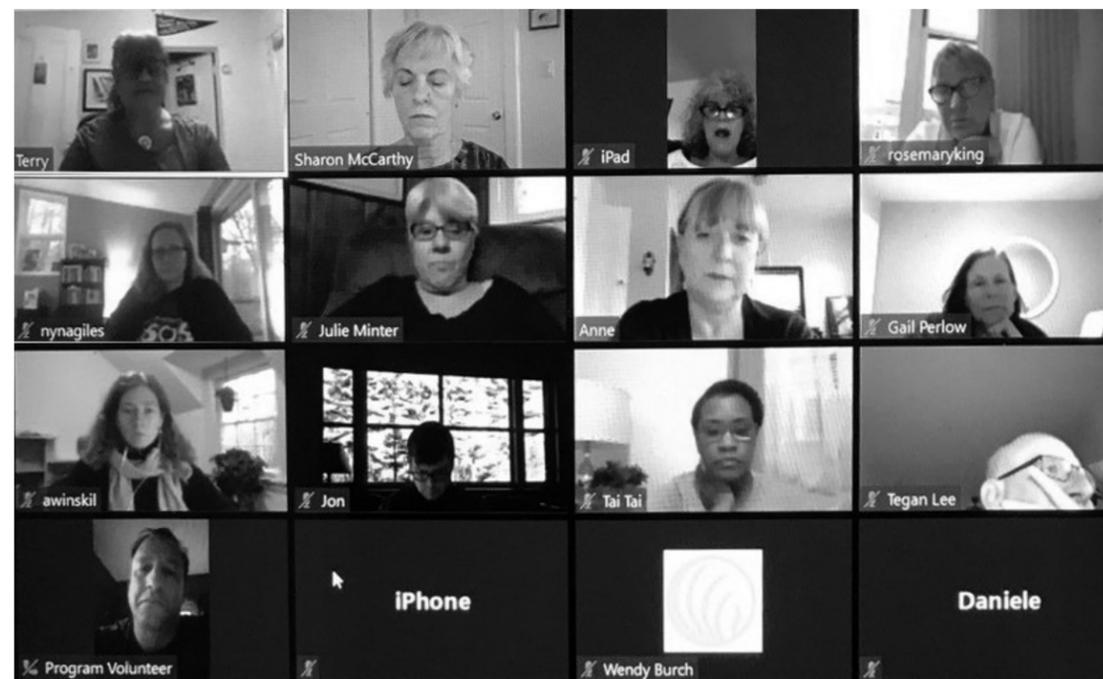
disorders). NAMI FaithNet also encourages the role of faith in recovery for those for whom faith is a key component of their experience.

NAMI FaithNet is dedicated to providing and promoting the creation and exchange of information, tools and other resources to help NAMI members and friends educate faith communities about mental health disorders and the vital role spirituality can play in recovery. NAMI FaithNet is not a religious network; rather, it is a mental health education and awareness outreach to clergy and congregations as well as to individuals who seek faith as a component of their recovery. NAMI FaithNet respects all religious beliefs.

Our active committee has more than 30 members. We are focusing on our first Zoom presentation in October, "Coping with Two Pandemics using Faith and Hope: Addressing the Barriers of Racism, Mental Health Challenges and Loss." Last year we focused on "Connecting to the Power of Faith and Spirituality in Healing the Crisis of Suicide." The NAMI Queens Nassau FaithNet Committee applied for a grant from NAMI

National for a one day retreat for faith leaders. Under consideration would be "Layers of Loss - Navigating through Grief with Compassion and Faith" and "Loss can take many forms and affects each of us in unique and challenging ways." Faith Leaders will share wisdom and explore important issues we may have coping with loss and grief, both for their congregations, as well as for themselves.

I co-chair this committee with two faith leaders. We are honored to have faith leaders representing multiple faiths, among them Roman Catholic, Protestant, Judaism, Islam and Buddhism. ■



Recent NAMI-NYS Family Support Group Facilitator Training, led by Mary Beth Honsinger and Christine Rickeman

The NAMI-NYS/Queensbridge Partnership: Working Together to Expand Mental Wellness in the Community

Several months ago, NAMI-NYS connected with *Showtime*, former NBA star Metta World Peace and his organization Artest University. While in the NBA, Metta (who earlier this year changed his name to Metta Sandiford-Artest) publicly acknowledged his mental health issues and credited mental health professionals for helping him in his recovery. Metta grew up

in the Queensbridge Public Housing Development located in Queens, New York at a time of particular turmoil, and the traumatic experiences he had as a child most likely contributed to his mental health issues as an adult. Metta and his father Ron Artest have dedicated themselves to helping the residents of Queensbridge by connecting them with resources, particularly in the area of mental health. That is where NAMI comes in.

Following conversations with Artest University and the local NAMI affiliates (NAMI NYC Metro and NAMI Queens/Nassau), NAMI-NYS participated in an event organized by Showtime in 2019. NAMI-NYS and the local NAMI affiliates were pleased to see the interest in NAMI support from the Queensbridge residents, and NAMI-NYS was able to connect with several local leaders in the community. Many of them were able to attend NAMI-NYS's 2019 Education Conference.

Working with these local stakeholders and Artest University, NAMI-NYS and the local affiliates began working on a plan to bring NAMI resources and programs to Queensbridge. We were fortunate to receive a BRSS TACS technical assistance grant from SAMHSA to help coordinate this effort. While the onset of COVID-19 delayed the project somewhat, planning has been ongoing through 2020.

NAMI-NYS and the local NAMI affiliates developed a needs assessment survey for distribution to the Queensbridge residents so that we can evaluate what programs and services that NAMI offers would best benefit the community. Community feedback and two-way communication is vital to the success of the partnership. NAMI-NYS was also able to form a committee consisting of NAMI NYC-Metro, NAMI Queens/Nassau, Artest University and Queensbridge community



leaders to plan an event to provide information about NAMI programs, disseminate the needs assessment survey and to create a dialogue with the Queensbridge residents.

Following the event, scheduled via a virtual platform in late August, NAMI-NYS and the local NAMI affiliates will evaluate the results of the survey and schedule NAMI programs based on those results. The ultimate goal will be for the Queensbridge Community, in partnership with the local NAMI affiliates, to identify potential program leaders from among the residents and for NAMI to provide training for them to continue and expand NAMI programs and support within the community.

NAMI-NYS further hopes to use this model in other communities around the state that do not have NAMI support, so that NAMI can provide support, education and advocacy to as many people that need it. ■



NAMI-NYS Education Conference

NAMI-NYS is excited to announce the details of our 2020 Education Conference-*Building Momentum: Coming Together to Create Our Future*. The online event will take place October 23-24th. As with many things in 2020, this year's conference experience will certainly be different as we transition to a virtual platform, but we assure you, your experience will be no less powerful. The conference will allow the NAMI-NYS family to come together and provide resources to help us collectively take the first steps towards recovering from the traumas of 2020 as well as inspire us to rise up and start shaping our future.

2020 NAMI-NYS Education Conference

Building Momentum:



Coming Together to Create Our Future.

OCTOBER 23-25 ■ ALBANY MARRIOTT

This year's Friday agenda will also be a little different. Instead of focus tracks on children's issues, criminal justice, veterans and military families and dual diagnosis, the agenda will instead focus on exploring the mental health impacts of the events of 2020 and the steps needed to bring about both our personal healing as well as how NAMI-NYS and our affiliates can help meet the needs of their community and spread much needed mental wellness as we move forward. Though there won't be focus tracks this year, the important topics our traditional tracks cover will be incorporated throughout Friday's agenda.

The day will begin with the plenary session, *First Steps Towards Healing: Addressing and Overcoming the Grief and Trauma of COVID-19, the Economy and Racial Injustice*. This will feature three presentations. The first will be a discussion of the general grief existing in our society stemming from the loss of normalcy, the loss of loved ones, the loss of financial security and detail how to overcome these stressors and start healing. The second presentation will look at racial injustice, the consequences of mental health disparities and how NAMI can be part of the solution.

The third session will explore the psychological impact of 2020 on children as well as overcoming trauma.

Presenters include Dr. Wilfred Farquharson, Director of the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Outpatient Clinic at the Stony Brook Medical System and Co-Chair of the New York State Office of Mental Health's Multicultural Advisory Committee and Christine Crawford, MD, MPH, Associate Director of Psychiatry Medical Student Education at Boston University School of Medicine.

Friday's featured session will be *Our Path Forward: Understanding and Prevailing Over Our Current Social Determinants of Mental Health*. We are thrilled to welcome Merrill Rotter, M.D., Special Assistant to the Commissioner of the New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH) for this presentation. Dr. Rotter heads up OMH's efforts to address social determinants of mental health, which are conditions in the environments in which people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks.

Dr. Rotter will explain how the COVID-19 outbreak both exposed long-existing negative social determinants of mental health as well as created a series of new ones. He will detail how OMH aims to address these and how NAMI is involved in these efforts. Dr. Rotter is also an expert on reforming the criminal justice-mental illness interface and will discuss the role of law enforcement in social determinants of mental health. With increased discussions across the country on changing the role of police, Dr. Rotter will detail changes to police procedures that can improve the social determinants of mental health in many communities in New York State.

The afternoon will consist of the *Education to Action: Creating Our Future* breakout sessions which are designed to empower you to help shape a future where mental wellness initiatives and access to mental health services are available in every community in New York State.

The first session, *How NAMI-NYS and Our Affiliates are Shaping the Future*, will detail how both before and during the outbreak NAMI-NYS and our affiliates have engaged

in innovative programs that have helped meet the needs of traditionally underserved communities. Projects highlighted will include the NAMI Syracuse initiative to address the mental health needs of entire military families with a unique program that offers NAMI Homefront and Peer to Peer along with child-care all at the same time and location. NAMI-NYC Metro will share how they started the Black Minds Matter program, and NAMI-NYS will provide an update on our landmark Queensbridge initiative.

The session, *Thinking Big and Taking Action*, will demonstrate how both individuals living with a mental illness as well as family members are taking their big ideas and putting them into action to address a lack of mental health services and increase mental health awareness in their communities. Presenters include Michelle Hammer of SchizophrenicNYC.

The third session *Using Multimedia to Increase Our Voice* will showcase how NAMI-NYS and our members are using both traditional and non-traditional forms of media to raise awareness of mental health issues and to project our advocacy voice. This session will also highlight NAMI-NYS's new *Breakthroughs* video series. The final session *Casting a Wider Faithnet* will explore ways to increase relationships with faith-based communities and how these partnerships can have a huge impact in addressing mental health disparities.

On Friday evening we will be holding a *Café NAMI* night of inspiration and entertainment. This celebration of the NAMI-NYS spirit will feature some of the most talented members of the NAMI-NYS family. The *Café NAMI* will include music, poetry, spoken word and comedy.

Saturday will have a more traditional feel as we explore the latest research and treatments for psychiatric disorders. Saturday morning will once again be dedicated to the NAMI-NYS belief that research is our hope for the future. Our program will start by presenting our *2020 Excellence in Research Award* to Dr. Barbara Cornblatt, who will then detail her work.

Following that we will discuss the importance of *Partnering on Research* which will discuss how we need to better incorporate the importance of research and the hope that it holds into the mental health movement and how that starts

by including this message of hope in our NAMI-NYS activities and programs. The session will also dispel many of the myths around participating in clinical trials. Finally, research leaders will detail the exciting studies being conducted in NYS and by NIMH which are currently recruiting.

The afternoon will feature two breakout session tracks. The earlier breakouts will include workshop sessions on the latest in treating schizophrenia, bi-polar disorder, the overlap of depression and anxiety, borderline personality disorder and dual-diagnosis. The conference will conclude with the *Healing Starts with Awareness* track which will feature workshops on LGBTQI issues, *Using Communication to Cut through Cultural Divides* and a *Zero Suicide* session.

We will also soon be announcing our *2020 Leaders of Mental Health Awareness* winners, more speaker details and information on our young adult track. The conference platform will provide you with opportunities to network with discussion rooms and the event will also include a virtual exhibit area which will allow you to interact with exhibitors.

While we will not be able to be in the same location, we will not let physical distance cause social distance, as the education conference will still allow us to come together to learn from one another, help each other heal and begin creating the future we want to see. ■



Wilfred Farquharson Ph.D.



Dr. Crawford



Merrill Rotter, M.D.



Michelle Hammer



Luke Kramer

NAMI-NYS Youth Development

NAMI-NYS Youth Advisory Council

NAMI-NYS Board member Pooja Mehta has been working with the staff to expand the Youth Advisory Council, and NAMI-NYS is looking for young people to advise on initiatives around mental health going forward.

The steering committee has developed an interest form and survey for young people to provide their availability and gauge their enthusiasm for becoming involved with the council.

In addition to plans for the council, NAMI-NYS Communications Specialist Cassandra Farrugia has been working with the various NAMI on Campus clubs to assist with keeping connected and bringing awareness activities to college campuses. In some cases, NAMI-NYS is working with colleges who do not have an active NAMI on Campus club but still want to bring attention to the need for mental health awareness and support. In one instance, a local college is planning to train young NAMI members to offer NAMI support groups to their fellow students.

If you or someone you know is between the ages 18 and 29 and interested in making a difference around how we address mental health and mental health issues, we encourage you to become a part of the advisory council. We are also interested in receiving input from high school and middle

school age students about their mental health needs and recommendations for NAMI-NYS's activities in that direction.

Please stay connected through our Instagram and Facebook pages, where NAMI-NYS also offers support and provides the latest news around the issues that affect our members and other mental health advocates. ■

NAMI-NYS and NAMI Capital Region Partner with RPI

During Mental Health Awareness Month, Sheryl Spencer, an LCSW with the Counseling Center at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI), reached out to Cassandra Farrugia, NAMI-NYS Communication Specialist, who had presented for the RPI's Counseling Center late last year. Together, they worked to find ways for RPI to become more involved during this time of social distancing.

Now, NAMI-NYS, NAMI Capital Region, RPI's Counseling Center and a group of dedicated students and alumni are in the process of establishing multiple virtual Student Peer to Peer Support Groups for the greater RPI community. In addition, RPI alumnus Ian Steenstra is in the process of developing a web application that offers access to counseling support and Nirva Patel's team is continuing to identify the campus' mental health needs. ■

What is NAMI on Campus?

NoC are student-led, student-run mental health organizations for college campuses

NoC Purpose:

- Raise Mental Health awareness with events, programs & campaigns
- Educate campus community with presentations, guest speakers and student panels
- Advocate for improved mental health services and policies on campus
- Support peers with signature NAMI programs and training

To start the NoC process contact your [local NAMI Affiliate](#) or [Cassandra Farrugia](#), NAMI-NYS Communication Specialist, at Cassandra@naminys.org.

NAMI-NYS Breakthroughs

The purpose of NAMI Breakthroughs is to share breakthroughs in mental health support, education, advocacy, and stigma. Our NAMI Breakthroughs team will be keeping you updated on the latest mental health news at NAMI, in New York State and Nationally. We will also be hosting experts and their breakthroughs in their fields. And sharing personal breakthroughs to highlight the power of using your voice – to connect, heal and advocate for yourself and loved ones.

Introducing the NAMI-NYS Breakthroughs Team:

Cassandra Farrugia, NAMI-NYS Communication Specialist



Cassandra studied Psychology and Women's Gender and Sexualities Studies at Bronx Community College, Fordham University and SUNY New Paltz. Read our **Meet the**

Staff section to learn more about Cassandra's role and projects at NAMI-NYS.

About Haley Amering, NAMI-NYS Intern



Haley is a senior studying psychology and leadership at the University at Albany, and is a full time intern this summer with NAMI-NYS. Projects that Haley has

contributed to include research regarding: mental health within BIPOC communities in NYS, the impacts that a lack of mental health resources has, grant funding, the impact that mental health has on children, along with being a part of the team that developed NAMI Breakthroughs.

About Emma Oliver, NAMI-NYS Volunteer



Emma is from Albany, New York. She is a Master's occupational therapy student at Ithaca College and will be completing her last clinical placement starting at the end of August. She is hoping

to get her first occupational therapy job in a mental health or substance use treatment center in the Albany area. Emma joined the NAMI-NYS team as a volunteer this past May. She first got involved by volunteering for our Mental Health Awareness Campaign in May and is now helping to create this breakthrough video series.

On NAMI Breakthroughs

"I am so excited to be part of the NAMI Breakthroughs team. Our team is dedicated to using this platform to share breakthroughs in mental health to our community members statewide. As of now, we are a small group but we hope with our youth development initiatives, we will be able to recruit new faces and voices to join us. My NAMI Breakthrough videos will focus on NAMI and mental health news. We hope you will tune in!"

Contact Cassandra Farrugia at Cassandra@naminys.org for more information and/or if you are interested in joining the team.

On NAMI Breakthroughs

"Mental health advocacy is something that has always been important to me, because I have struggled with various mental health diagnoses for my entire life, and know how scary and confusing it can get. I want to be a voice for the voiceless, and want to make sure that people are heard loud and clear. My Breakthrough videos will primarily be focused on the importance of mental health education and advocacy, as well as going over psychological explanations for common mental health obstacles. Improving one's own mental health takes one step at a time, so why not take that first step now, with us at NAMI Breakthroughs?"

Contact Haley Amering at loudandclear218@gmail.com to learn more.

On NAMI Breakthroughs

"I am extremely passionate about breaking the stigmas around mental health and mental illnesses. I, myself, am living with mental health diagnoses. Everyone has mental health and I want to help break the stigmas around mental health. In my video series, I will be breaking through with a variety of experts! I will be conducting interviews with a variety of individuals who work in the mental health field and individuals who live with mental illness. The goal of these upcoming interviews is to help to educate young people, as well as show young people that having conversations regarding mental health is so necessary."

Contact Emma Oliver at Oliveremma383@gmail.com to learn more.

NAMI-NYS Advocates

NAMI-NYS has not allowed COVID-19 or social isolation to silence our advocacy voice. In fact, it is being projected louder than ever during a time when it is certainly needed the most, as we fight to ensure the appropriate services are available to meet the increasing demand for mental health care. As with most aspects of our lives, our advocacy activities drastically changed after the COVID-19 outbreak and we continue to adapt to addressing needs that arise on both the state and federal level.

As we go to print, our advocacy is most focused on fighting the potential loss of mental health services in both the hospital and community settings. While COVID-19 has increased the need for mental health services, it is also allowing private hospitals to reduce and eliminate vital inpatient psychiatric beds due to the state mandate that 30% of hospitals' beds be available in case of another COVID surge. Many hospitals have disproportionately targeted psychiatric beds for elimination in order to meet the mandate. Some hospitals have totally eliminated their psychiatric beds; in many cases we fear that the beds will be lost for good, as hospitals have long aimed to abolish these beds due to their lack of profitability in relation to other health issues requiring hospitalization.

We are seeing this disturbing trend both upstate and downstate and in the most extreme case the Health Alliance of the Hudson Valley closed its entire unit in Kingston which was the sole provider of inpatient services for people in three counties (Ulster, Delaware and



Lucille Ettere

Otsego). We are working with the NYS Nurses Association (NYSNA) to bring attention to this issue and fight this elimination of beds as NAMI-NYS has long argued that there are not enough beds to begin with.

NAMI-NYS dedicated an episode of **Perspectives** to the issue which demonstrated how the lack of beds is creating difficulties for many families and hindering people's ability to successfully recover. Among those featured were NAMI-NYS Board member Lucille Ettere and her husband Roy, who discussed how a lack of beds led to a series of premature discharges for their daughter Nicole before she lost her battle to mental illness and how Nicole's Law looks to hold hospital accountable and improve discharges.

Joan Rowley represented NAMI-NYS families at a demonstration in front of New York Presbyterian Brooklyn Methodist hospital,

organized by NYSNA, urging the hospital not to eliminate their psychiatric beds. NAMI-NYS Associate Director, Public Affairs, Matthew Shapiro appeared on the **HealthCetera in the Catskills** show on WIOX Radio to discuss the impact of the loss of the psychiatric unit in Kingston, and Matthew has also been working with a reporter from the Wall St. Journal on an in-depth feature on this issue.

The loss of state revenue due to the shut-down has led to a 20% cut to community mental health providers and mental health housing programs during the current budget quarter (July-September), these cuts will proceed into the next quarter and indefinitely unless Congress provides funding for the states or another revenue source (such as changing tax-laws) is utilized. Combined, the loss of hospital beds and the cuts to community services and housing programs is going to have a catastrophic impact on people and families' ability to access mental health services.

NAMI-NYS is working with a broad coalition of mental health, housing and substance abuse organizations to address these cuts. We are advancing the message that throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, Governor Cuomo regularly mentioned the importance of maintaining one's mental wellness and praised those on the frontline as heroes. Now, the state is cutting mental health services when they are needed more than ever and making the jobs of the frontline heroes much more difficult.

Continued on next page



2020 Legislative Advocacy Day



Assemblywoman Carmen De La Rosa



Senator David Carlucci and Assemblywoman Nathalia Fernandez

NAMI-NYS and our partners understand the current fiscal situation. NAMI-NYS has sent out several Action Alerts asking the Senate to advance the provisions in the HEROES Act which would provide funding for the states. Our advocacy partnership also argues that there are other non-essential services that can be cut, and there are other ways to generate revenue such as reinstating a stock transfer tax. We are working on both a media campaign as well as setting up meetings with Executive staff to bring attention to and address this issue.

Along with fighting to protect these critical services, NAMI-NYS is still advocating for other key access issues including urging Governor Cuomo to issue an emergency order that would allow pharmacies to administer long-acting injectable antipsychotic medications while mental health clinics are closed due to COVID. We are also still participating in the Campaign for Alternatives to Isolated Confinement's efforts to reform the use of solitary confinement.

We have also worked with Congressman John Katko (NY-24) to urge the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to immediately

expand Medicare coverage for mental health services provided over the phone to seniors.

Just as the COVID-19 outbreak disrupted every aspect of our lives it also halted the momentum of what was shaping up to be a tremendous legislative session for NAMI-NYS and the advancement of our signature piece of legislation, Nicole's Law (S.6629/A.9535).

On March 3rd NAMI-NYS held a landmark Legislative Action Day. Our dedicated advocates made sure the voices of those representing individuals and families impacted by mental illness reverberated loudly throughout the corridors of the Capitol and in the halls of the Legislative Office Building. Advocates from all corners of the state went to nearly 100 legislative meetings. NAMI-NYS also participated in a **press conference** on the need to create a 9-8-8 suicide/crisis line and rallied in support of mental health housing.

NAMI-NYS is working with legislative leaders to reduce suicide and advance **Nicole's Law**. During Legislative Action Day, NAMI-NYS joined Senate Mental Health Chair and Nicole's Law sponsor, David Carlucci and Assemblywoman Nathalia Fernandez for a press conference on

a bill (S.6833/A.8778) which would create a 9-8-8 suicide/crisis line in New York State. NAMI-NYS Board member Lucille Ettere (whose family's story inspired Nicole's Law) and NAMI-NYS Associate Director, Public Affairs, Matthew Shapiro both spoke during the press conference, and Lucille was also interviewed by Spectrum News.

During the day the Ettere family also met with Nicole Law's Assembly sponsor, Assemblywoman Carmen De La Rosa. They also met with their Senator Pete Harckham and Assemblyman Kevin Byrne, both of whom signed on as bill co-sponsors. Following Legislative Action Day, the bill received several new co-sponsors from representatives from both parties after their offices received visits from NAMI-NYS advocates.

It is also important to note that in late June, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) announced that a new three-digit number will be established to reach the National Suicide Prevention Hotline. The FCC voted on July 16 at its open meeting to make 9-8-8 the number an individual seeking help can dial and be connected to the hotline.

All telecommunications carriers, and Voice over IP service providers, will be required to implement the new number nationwide by July 16, 2022.

FCC Chairman Ajit Pai stated, "988 will save lives. Helping Americans in crisis connect to counselors trained in suicide prevention is one of the most important things we can do at the FCC... We believe that 988 – which has an echo of the 911 number we all know as an emergency number – will help people access mental health services."

Mental Health Housing programs have long been a leading priority for NAMI-NYS. During Legislative Advocacy Day we demonstrated our support for mental health housing with our Executive Director Wendy Burch leading participants at a **Bring it Home NYS** rally at the Capitol's War Room right outside the Governor's office. Association for Community Living CEO Toni Lasicki also provided an update on housing during the morning session.

Improving the criminal justice-mental illness interface has also long been a leading priority for NAMI-NYS. NAMI-NYS has been a leader in advancing Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT) across the state. This crucial initiative trains law enforcement and first responders to de-escalate situations involving people with mental illness and how to divert them from incarceration and towards recovery. During the day, NAMI-NYS presented one of our 2019 Hero of CIT Awards to Senator David Carlucci for his leadership in ensuring that the Senate funds this vital program. We were also thrilled to welcome members of the Campaign Against Isolated Confinement (CAIC) to participate in the day to bring attention to the Humane Alternative to Longterm Confinement bill (A2500/S1623). CAIC leader Victor Pate also spoke during the morning portion of the program.



Bring It Home Rally

Throughout the day, NAMI-NYS got to meet with key state leaders. NYS Office of Mental Health Commissioner, Dr. Ann Sullivan, met with the Ettere family, then addressed NAMI-NYS advocates during the morning program. NAMI-NYS President Ariel Coffman and NAMI-NYS Board member Rob Laitman, MD had a productive meeting with Senate Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins. Assembly Mental Health Chair, Aileen Gunther got our morning program off on a rousing start by firing up our advocates and encouraging

them to speak loudly and clearly to educate her colleagues on the needs of our community. NAMI-NYS Board members Ann Canastra and Maggie Bristol, along with members of NAMI Columbia County, met with Assembly Veterans Chair, Didi Barrett, to discuss the need to **advance veterans' mental health initiatives**.

NAMI-NYS will remain steadfast in advocating to ensure the continued availability of mental health services for all New Yorkers. ■



Senator Pam Helming



Assemblyman Colin Schmitt



Senate Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins



Assemblyman Charles Fall



Assemblyman Ed Ra



Senator Diane Savino

NAMI-NYS Celebrates Mental Health Awareness Month

NAMI-NYS hopes this finds you and your family safe and well as we navigate this difficult time. NAMI-NYS families are no strangers to challenges and we remain steadfast in helping guide our community through this crisis just as we have helped families through mental health challenges.

NAMI-NYS has been working harder than ever to make sure that no one in our community goes through this experience alone. While we remain physically distant, NAMI-NYS is doing everything we can to keep us together.

Each year millions of Americans face the reality of living with a mental illness. During May, NAMI-NYS joins the national movement to raise awareness about mental health. This May, NAMI-NYS's Mental Health Awareness Month Campaign went virtual online with a month full of engaging events and many other initiatives to keep our community members connected and supported.

All of our activities during Mental Health Awareness Month and throughout the COVID-19 outbreak have been offered free of charge. This is no different than how our NAMI Signature Programs have been offered in communities in all corners of New York State at no cost to the public.

Please remember that your generosity is what allows us to achieve this, and now we need your support more than ever as we face difficult economic times ahead. Together we can ensure that NAMI-NYS continues to be a beacon of light during these stormy times as well as a leader in helping New York move forward.

We thank you in advance in partnering with NAMI-NYS to keep New Yorkers connected, supported and mentally well. ■



Learn more about our free virtual events:

NAMI Virtual Pet Parade

On Saturday, May 9th, NAMI-NYS held a Pet Parade to celebrate and share the wonderful healing powers of all our favorite furry friends. The parade was led by our grand marshal cat, Harriet, and featured dogs, cats, rabbits, a horse and **Smokey the NAMI Donkey**. NAMI-NYS thanks all those who participated in this great family fun virtual event. ■



NAMI-NYS Live Stand Up Comedy Night

On Wednesday, May 27th, NAMI-NYS hosted a *Stand Up Comedy Night*, to share in the healing powers of laughter. NAMI-NYS offers a special thanks to all our incredibly talented comics. ■

NAMI-NYS Cooking Up Comfort



On Wednesday, May 13th NAMI-NYS hosted a cooking class with Jeremy Bristol, U.S. Army veteran and husband of NAMI-NYS Boardmember, Maggie Bristol. NAMI-NYS is so grateful to Jeremy for generously volunteering his time to show us how to make his family's famous southern style biscuits and sausage gravy. ■

NAMI-NYS Night of Musicals featuring Zak Sandler



On Saturday, May 16th, NAMI-NYS hosted A Night of Musicals featuring Zak Sandler's original musical, *"Inside My Head."*

About Zak Sandler:

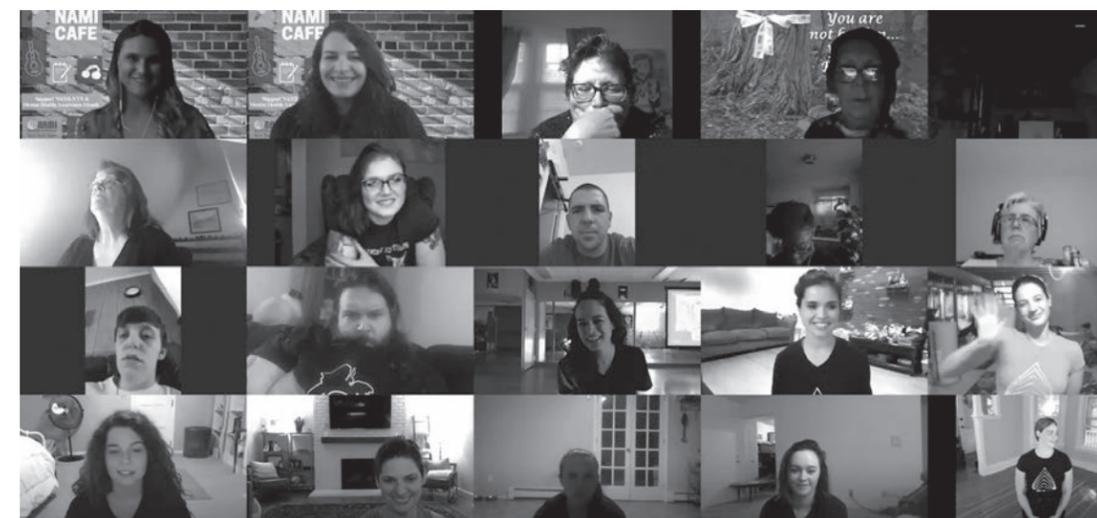
Zak is the recipient of the 2018 NAMI-NYS Young Leader Award, which acknowledged the unique ways Zak is introducing the conversation of mental health awareness into the public consciousness.

NAMI-NYS offers Zak a special thanks for sharing his musical, his personal experience with bipolar and for facilitating a Q & A discussion after the show that allowed our NAMI-NYS community members to connect and share their lived experiences with mental health conditions. If you missed the show, check it out on our facebook page [facebook.com/naminewyorkstate](https://www.facebook.com/naminewyorkstate). ■

NAMI Cafe Series

On May 6th and 20th, NAMI-NYS launched our Cafe NAMI Series, virtual nights of live performances. Our NAMI Cafe Series was designed to be a safe space to connect, share and heal for our community members statewide. The performances included, musicians, dancers, poets and much more.

NAMI-NYS would like to thank all our incredibly talented performers for joining us and sharing their craft. ■



Governor Cuomo Proclaims May 30th Mental Health Day of Hope in New York State

Governor Andrew Cuomo declared May 30th, 2020 as *Mental Health Day of Hope* in New York State. The proclamation details the strides New York has taken, both before and during COVID-19, including our leading role in Crisis Intervention Teams and the introduction of the New York State Office of Mental Health Crisis Line. It also praises the work of NAMI-NYS and our NAMI Affiliates. ■

NAMI Idol

On Friday, May 1st, NAMI-NYS kicked off our Mental Health Awareness Campaign by hosting *NAMI Idol*, a virtual night of karaoke fun. NAMI Idol provided a safe and fun space for our NAMI family to sing, dance and connect as we continued to practice social distancing. ■

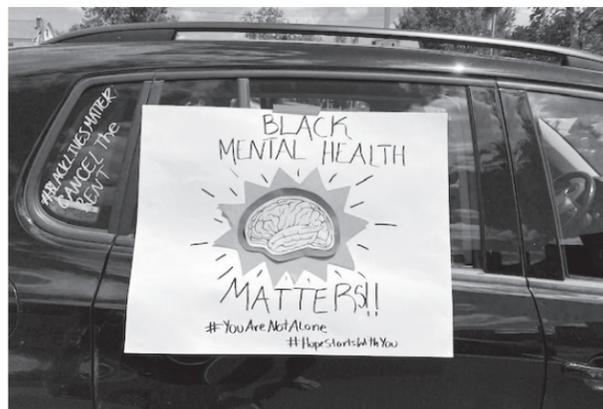
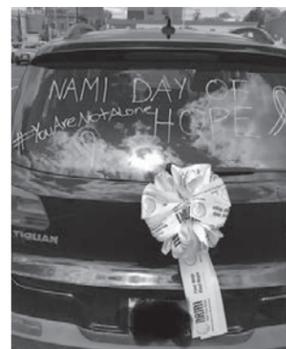
NAMI-NYS Holds Day of Hope Car Parade and Live Virtual Concert

On Saturday, May 30th, NAMI-NYS and NAMI Capital Region partnered with the Albany Police Department, Albany Fire Department and the Albany County Department of Mental Health to hold a car parade through the streets of Albany to commemorate the end of Mental Health Awareness Month.

Our car parade was designed to spread hope and resilience, raise awareness of mental health issues, encourage the public to embrace mental wellness and display gratitude to those on the frontlines who are addressing the physical and mental health of New Yorkers. Hope, resilience and action are required more than ever. Remember you are not alone, NAMI-NYS is here for you.

Later that evening, NAMI-NYS held a Virtual Day of Hope Concert featuring **Hot Club of Saratoga**, the Capital Region's premier gypsy swing ensemble.

NAMI-NYS offers a warm thank you to the wonderfully talented members of Hot Club of Saratoga and all the dedicated NAMI-NYS and Affiliate leaders who shared their stories and personal connections with NAMI and mental health, and their inspiring messages of hope and resiliency. If you missed the show, check it out on our facebook page, facebook.com/naminewyorkstate. ■



NAMI-NYS Spreads Black, Indigenous People of Color Mental Health Awareness

In May of 2008, the US House of Representatives announced July as Bebe Moore Campbell National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month. As NAMI-NYS moves forward to build authentic and lasting solidarity among Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) impacted by mental illness, we will be using the term BIPOC going forward.

Mental health conditions do not discriminate based on race, color, gender or identity. Anyone can experience the challenges of mental illness regardless of their background. However, background and identity can make access to mental health treatment much more difficult.

Taking on the challenges of mental health conditions, health coverage and the stigma of

mental illness, and the disparities in access to mental health care in communities of color requires all of us. With support from our Multicultural Committee, NAMI-NYS is dedicated to addressing these disparities,

promoting cultural competency, and delivering help and hope to all who need it.

During July, NAMI-NYS held events and shared resources to promote BIPOC Mental Health Awareness. ■

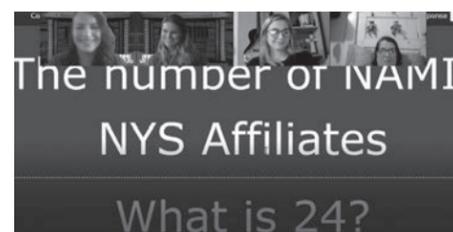


Learn more about our events:

NAMI-NYS Hosted Jeopardy Game Night!

On Wednesday, July 8th, NAMI-NYS hosted a Jeopardy Game Night to test our contestants' knowledge on NAMI, BIPOC Mental Health, Mental Illnesses, History and more!

We would like to offer our first, second and third place winners a special congratulations and a warm thank you to all our contestants. The event was great fun that allowed us to be challenged and expanded our mental health knowledge together. ■



NAMI 101	BIPOC Mental Health	Mental Illnesses	History & Stigma	Living with fame
100	100	100	100	100
200	200	200	200	200
300	300	300	300	300
400	400	400	400	400
500	500	500	500	500

NAMI-NYS Hosted NAMI Cafe for BIPOC Mental Health Awareness

On Wednesday, July 22nd, NAMI-NYS hosted another powerful night of live performances at CAFE NAMI.

CAFE NAMI was created as a part of our Mental Health Awareness Campaign in May. The event is an open mic night that includes poets, musicians and more. As part of the NAMI-NYS BIPOC Mental Health Awareness Campaign, we designed our CAFE NAMI to be a safe space to connect, share and heal for our community members statewide as we work to support and spread Black, Indigenous People of Color Mental Health Awareness.

As Alanna Williams shared during her performance, for many, music is a way of coping and healing. At NAMI CAFE, we encourage all participants to explore creative forms of expression to share and start conversations about mental health.

NAMI-NYS would like to offer a warm thank you to all our amazingly talented performers for reminding us of the importance of sharing our experiences and stories of hope. ■

NAMI-NYS Board Member Featured in NAMI "Strength Over Silence" Series

In NAMI's latest "Strength Over Silence" Video Series, Pooja Mehta, a NAMI-NYS Board member and rising leader in the Asian American/Pacific Islander mental health community, shared her story of recovery and her focus on amplifying the voices of people who are underrepresented in their communities.

In addition to being a NAMI-NYS Board member, Pooja is currently a student at Columbia University working toward a master's degree in public health. ■



NAMI-NYS Off The Mask

Ending Stigma: A celebration of Mental Wellness

What is Off The Mask?

NAMI-NYS Off the Mask event is a fashion and art show to help raise awareness and much needed funding for our programs, support and advocacy. Last year's event was a great success and we hope to improve upon it this year despite the many challenges COVID-19 had led us to face.

Off the Mask showcases over 25 model ambassadors taking the catwalk in clothes donated by area designers and shops. The models share their connection to mental health issues and to promoting overall mental wellness through their model profiles on the website, small community fund-raising events and, of course, on the runway the evening of Off the Mask. Each model is asked to raise a minimum of \$2,500 in support of NAMI-NYS, and they do this through the Off the Mask website, where each model has a posted biography accompanied by a "donate" button, as well as small fundraisers leading up to the event. The fundraising activities are a fun way to raise

awareness by supporting a great cause. Some examples are virtual yoga, bootcamps, concerts and paint and sip parties- the possibilities are endless and are only limited by the model ambassadors' imaginations!

The art component of the evening is linked to the silent auction. NAMI-NYS solicits donated artwork for display and adds the pieces to the silent auction. The Off the Mask Committee is in the process of selecting art and is particularly interested in pieces that have a connection to our cause.

When is Off The Mask?

This year, our second annual Off the Mask Fashion and Art Show will be held virtually on **Friday, November 6th**.

How can you become involved in Off the Mask?

There are several ways that both NAMI affiliates and individuals can support the event. Contributing to one or more of the model ambassadors, whether through a straight

monetary donation or by attending one of their fundraising events, is one option for showing your support. If you are an artist (or know someone who is), consider donating a piece to the art show. Any assistance with sponsorships for the event is also greatly appreciated. We are also accepting items for the silent auction, and we would be grateful to include any contributions you may have. And, finally, we need people to attend the virtual show!

Please consider supporting this year's Off the Mask—proceeds benefit NAMI programs and training, the annual Education Conference and Legislative Advocacy Day, outreach efforts, including production and distribution of NAMI-NYS brochures, pamphlets and other literature and general support for the local NAMI affiliates throughout New York.

How to learn more:

Visit OfftheMask.org or contact NAMI-NYS Community Education & Outreach Coordinator, **Kate Tortora**: kate@naminys.org ■

Off The Mask Model Ambassadors Raise Mental Health Awareness

Throughout the past few months several of our model ambassadors have thought outside of the box to lend their skills and talents to spread mental health awareness and help promote NAMI-NYS Off The Mask event. Lisa O'Donnell Wolfe extended her Fitness Bootcamp classes and Megan Morgan held an Instagram Live Benefit Concert.

Instagram Live Benefit Concert

Megan Moran, Off The Mask Model Ambassador, hosted a beautiful virtual concert on Instagram Live with several other talented women who streamed the concert live via Instagram.

About Megan Moran:

Megan resides in Albany, NY and ultimate goals in life are to spread kindness, help people, share messages of self-reflection and self-love through my music, and build up everyone around her on a daily basis.

NAMI-NYS Model Ambassadors

Our Off The Mask Model Ambassadors have and will continue to hold creative virtual events leading up to Off The Mask in hopes of promoting the event and reaching their fundraising goal of \$2,500.

Learn more about our model ambassadors' virtual events:

Off The Mask Model Ambassador Fact or Fiction Mental Health Trivia Night

On Thursday, June 25th, Sarah Hutchinson, Off The Mask model ambassador, hosted a trivia night to raise funds for her walk down the catwalk. Sarah resides in Ghent, NY and is currently going to school for psychology research. She wanted to share her knowledge by hosting this engaging and educational event. Sarah's trivia event consisted of very well thought out fact or fiction questions surrounding mental health that were researched by Sarah herself. ■

Off The Mask Model Ambassador Live Virtual Boot Camp

Lisa O'Donnell Wolfe, Off the Mask model ambassador, hosted another great series: [Life Coaching](#), and [Strength & Conditioning Fitness Classes](#) through the month of July. Lisa has been generous enough to share her skills in hosting these programs to help others with their mental and physical wellness, as well as to promote Off The Mask and reach her \$2,500 goal.

To learn more about Off The Mask and how to support a model ambassador and their mission in walking the runway visit: OffTheMask.org ■

Meet our Off the Mask Models



Ariana DelliPaoli



Robin Tassinari



Ariffa Bevin



Ashley Coyne



Canastra Kids



Asa Snyder



Gigi Ackert



Mary Beth Honsinger



Cara Davis



George LaMarche



Emma Hughes



Ellen Ritz



Nia Flick



Pooja Mehta



Sarah Hutchinson



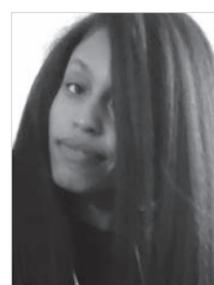
Ariel Coffman



Lisa Wolf



Matthew Shapiro



Leslye Benson



Mark McLean



Heather Thompson



John D. Bennett



RoseMarie Andrews



Gwedolyn Hayles



Kate Kroll



Peg Curtiss



Rob Laitman



Stamatia Pappas



Don Tallman



Gina Schwarz

NAMIWalks Your Way Went Virtual

NAMIWalks Your Way NYC Metro

On Saturday, May 30, 2,500 caring and compassionate New Yorkers gathered online for **NAMIWalks Your Way NYC**, the nation's largest mental health awareness event. The event, which benefits the National Alliance on Mental Illness of New York City (NAMI-NYC), raises vital funding for *no-cost education and support services* for more than 19,000 New Yorkers impacted by mental illness each year. With the impact of COVID-19 on all of our lives, we have seen an increased need for our services, and your support of NAMI-NYC through the Walk is life-changing for thousands of people.

NAMI NYC Metro reported, "NAMIWalks Your Way NYC exceeded our expectations on every level, and we are so proud to have been a part of this important moment. While nothing can replace the amazing feeling of standing with thousands of members of the community on the South Street Seaport, we also know that we were still very much a part of the national movement to advocate for mental health awareness." NAMI NYC Metro also reported they had over 2,500 viewers and raised \$619,000.



READ STORIES from people who benefit from your sponsorship. And remember, you have the power to change lives!

Larry Bryant



Larry Bryant

I join NAMIWalks in New York City because, like NAMI-NYC, I envision a world where all people affected by mental illness - particularly Black people - live healthy, fulfilling lives supported by a community who cares.

In Black communities in NYC and across the country, many people misunderstand what a mental health condition is and don't talk about this topic -- this includes teachers, employers, and therapists. This lack of knowledge leads many to believe that a mental health condition is a personal weakness and adds to a paralyzing and debilitating level of stigma. This stigma and fear will make most reluctant to discuss their mental health issues and seek treatment.

Because of the lack of information about mental health issues, it's not always clear where to find help when you may need it. Fortunately with NAMI-NYC, as well as locally-run NAMI affiliates across the country, you will find a safe and non-judgmental space to learn about mental health conditions and how to access treatments and supports.

Ariel Davis

"Really?! You don't look like someone who struggles with depression."

I often get some version of this comment when I tell people my story—that a year and a half ago I attempted suicide and spent nearly two months recovering in a series of hospitals. The comment, I know, is meant to be a compliment. Because yes, generally speaking, I am a happy, optimistic and active person with fulfilling relationships, hobbies, and a wonderful support system. But at various points in my life, I have also experienced crippling clinical depression. When unchecked, my depression casts a dark shadow over everything and makes me feel that I don't deserve or want to exist.

So when a well-intentioned person says I don't look like someone who struggles with depression, I don't take it as a compliment. Instead, I am reminded of the dangerous stigma that persists towards people living with mental illness and the toll it takes on their willingness and ability to get help. I am also reminded that while we have come a long way in dispelling falsehoods about mental illness - thanks in large part to organizations like NAMI - we still have a long way to go. That's why I continue to openly share my experiences and feel lucky to be able to volunteer with the NAMI-NYC team to make a difference.

Despite the setbacks caused by the COVID pandemic, NAMIWalks Your Way NYC 2020 participants rallied to support NAMI-NYC's free of charge programs and continued to fundraise through the month of July. With the generous support from sponsors, like you, NAMI will continue to serve more New Yorkers in need in the year ahead. We are grateful for your commitment, and we look forward to partnering with you again. ■



Ariel Davis

NAMIWalks Your Way Westchester

NAMI Westchester reports that more than 500 viewers joined them on May 30 for **NAMIWalks Your Way Westchester**.

NAMI Westchester stated, "Our biggest achievement during this difficult time was the success of **NAMIWalks Your Way Westchester**. Doing this virtual event enabled us the opportunity to highlight the programs and services we do along with testimonials from board members, government officials, community members, program presenters and more. Some were videos, some photos, and all were genuine and provided an uplifting message. As a result of this effort we had 37 sponsors, 196 registered participants and 52 teams, and we raised more than \$133,000. The awareness that was raised, and continues to be raised, is critical since mental health needs are critical at this time."



Sharon McCarthy



Marie Considine

In addition, NAMI Westchester shared that they see Fall 2020 as a time of change as their Executive Director, Sharon McCarthy, will be retiring on September 1st, and Marie Considine will be assuming that role. Marie has been with the affiliate for six years as the Director of Development and every year she has not only provided the affiliate with a financially successful walk but one of which they are very proud. Sharon has been with NAMI Westchester since 2006 and during this time the organization has grown in the amount of programs offered and has doubled staff size. She will continue to volunteer for NAMI Westchester as a Program Coordinator.

NAMI-NYS offers a heartfelt thank you to Sharon McCarthy for her years of dedicated service as NAMI Westchester's ED; we are so grateful for your continued work as NAMI Westchester's Program Coordinator. We would also like to congratulate Marie Considine. We look forward to seeing more great works from your affiliate. ■



NAMI-NYS Participates in May GivingTuesday Campaign

As part of our May Mental Health Awareness Month Campaign, NAMI-NYS participated in a May GivingTuesday campaign, a global generosity movement. During this time of global uncertainty, disconnection, and continued social injustice, mental health support, education, and advocacy is paramount. We offer all those who have been generously able to donate to NAMI-NYS at this time, a heartfelt thank you. ■

NAMI Capital Region Holds Contest for Mental Health Awareness Month

As part of their May Mental Health Awareness Campaign, NAMI Capital Region NY held a creative contest to show visions of mental wellness through drawings, paintings, photography and poetry. The contest consisted of two categories, 17yrs and younger and 18yrs and older.

The winners were determined through votes on Facebook and listed as follows:

NAMI Capital Region NY shared, "It was amazing to see everyone's beautiful artwork and talents and share on social media with all."

Congratulations to the 17 years and younger 1st place winner Maggie Jorgensen, 2nd place winner Jacob Jorgensen and 3rd place winner Samuel Jorgensen.

Congratulations to the 18 years and older 1st place winner L.F., 2nd place winner Caren Feinberg, and 3rd place winner Desere S.

Continued on next page



NAMI Capital Region Holds Contest for Mental Health Awareness Month *Continued*

Growing pains

*Growing pains have been the core of my troubles
 They have grown so much, that I am not the same
 I'm not sure if I can move forward with this burden on my shoulders
 The pain I feel makes me feel like I have to submit to my sorrow
 Like if I was chained to grief
 I feel like everywhere I go death follows
 No one will what I am going through
 They think they can relate, they think they know my anguish
 But in all actuality, all they know is what's on the surface
 They see whats on the outer layer
 They see the scars, but they don't know how far my flesh was cut
 So I closed the door on the world
 I locked myself in a room full of darkness
 I felt my heart go cold, now I was heartless
 So I sat alone, bent at the waist and prayed
 I asked my Heavenly Father "Can I be saved?"
 No one answered
 So I thought I was alone
 Then I heard a voice
 It said
 "Dear child of mine, don't you cry, my love is within you just have to find it,
 You have to try"
 I opened my eyes and there I was, in a room full of people who knew who I was
 I took a deep breath and realized that I was not the only one who had pain
 There were people who knew my depression
 My life was not stuck in a grave
 At that point I detached from my emotional pain
 I turned my absence into existence and my anger I distanced
 I didn't let my current pain turn into an imperishable shame*

The Delivery By L.F.

When she was a teenager
 I'd bring home groceries
 proudly
 after the lean years we'd had.
 I unpacked staples and snacks and a few
 surprises,
 all while telling her each thing I'd bought.

For the past 15 years,
 as she's bounced from apartment to apartment
 from bad guy to worse guy
 to the worst who tossed her off a roof,
 down the stairs, held her hostage;
 as her meds were upped
 along with her losses
 as she lost her license and then jobs
 as she went back to college and bounced from
 Dean's List
 to the worst guy
 to emergency rooms to psych wards,
 through alcohol and drug episodes,
 I faithfully brought her food.
 I faithfully brought her mail, which
 still came to my home.

For years, it has been my only sure contact
 with her.
 Mail. Food. Quick visits at the curb.
 Many times she was grateful,
 sometimes surly
 often blaming,
 looking more ragged each few months,
 this woman who once had bins of designer shoes
 and Coach purses
 was determined to start her own business
 but then could not even hold onto therapy
 appointments
 as place after place dismissed her
 despite my pleas.

On the days I would bring her things,
 I'd fall asleep each night
 repeating to myself over and over
 the name of each item:
 peanut butter, applesauce, seltzer,
 spaghetti, vitamins, topical pain relief gel,
 tampons, face cream.

It is enough
 It is never enough

It was a thin strand that kept us connected
 that allowed me to be a mother,
 to provide,
 it is a small footprint
 it is all I have had for so long.
 I take the joy, as small as a votive candle
 before a statue of Mary at church
 that you light
 and say a prayer like the thousands
 thousands thousands I have prayed,
 and this, this food, this mail,
 this listing of food,
 this naming of food over and over in the dark.
 this little joy,
 each item is a prayer
 that I dropped into the bag for her
 that I drop into my pillow.

Now, I don't even know where she is.
 I don't even have this.
 There are not enough candles, not enough
 churches.
 There are only empty bags stuffed in the corner
 of my kitchen
 waiting. ■

A Message to Our Donors

Mental health support has never been more crucial, and the support, education and advocacy NAMI-NYS affiliates provide has been vital as we navigate the serious issues affecting our community. Your donations are more important than ever. NAMI-NYS truly appreciates the contributions made by our generous donors.

Donations to NAMI-NYS support NAMI program delivery by the local affiliates, including the cost of materials and the training of program leaders. They also support NAMI-NYS's advocacy and outreach efforts both in the community and with elected leaders at the federal, state and local levels. Contributions also make it possible to offer events like the

annual Education Conference and Legislative Advocacy Day. The NAMI-NYS Information and Resource Helpline, media outreach and the production of mental health literature and pamphlets that are distributed statewide all rely on contributions from our supporters. ■

We are Most Grateful to Those Who Made Financial Donations To NAMI-NYS During The 1st and 2nd Quarter 2020

Up to \$100

Fred & Pat Anders, The Benevity Community Impact Fund, Columbia High School Class of 2022, Pat & Gabe Deyo, Janet Dwyer, Shelly Eisenhart, Catherine Finn, James Goman, Jane Hallick, Theresa Iasiello, Pamela Jackson, Jean M. Jamate, Gita Komareth, Marissa Mack, JoAnna Maxon, Ilene Mirenberg, Gregg Modell, Scott Paltrowitz, Victor Pate, Michaela Rizzuto, Daniel Schele, Mary Schlageter, Sheldon & Pearl Seidman, David Sills, Patricia Sine, Lauren Stanley, Margaret Sutton, Molly Swain, Brenda Van Wormer, Mary Ward, White Feather

\$100 to \$199

Barry Brover, MaryAnna O'Donnell, William Shelp, Patricia Weyland

\$200-\$299

Columbia High School Class of 2021, Carrie Newman, Lawrence O'Heron

\$500 to \$1,000

The Martin Family Charitable Fund, David L. Snitman and Susan R. Lewis, Stewart's Shops, Jane Susin

Over \$1,500

Brian O'Connor, Susana Tapia



NAMI-NYS and Harness



NAMI-NYS is excited to announce our collaboration with Harness, a recurring giving platform. We invite you to participate in this wonderful giving opportunity!

Harness allows participants to shop at all of their favorite places and will round up all purchases to the nearest dollar. At the end of each month, participants' change will then be donated directly to NAMI-NYS. Harness also allows participants to set up a recurring monthly donation or even a one-time donation.

NAMI-NYS would like to remind you that donations will go towards the efforts of providing support, education and advocacy for families and individuals impacted by mental health challenges. ■